

French
NIGHT LIFE

Stories

25¢

July



MARY Jane Baldwin was twenty-five and for six years she had taught school in Harmony Hollow. Outwardly she had all the appearances of a typical old maid slicked back Auburn hair, looped over her ears and wound into a tight knot. She wore glasses tinted a horrible blue. She never used powder, or perfume, and she always took a bath with unscented soap. Her plain oxfords had low heels, and her blouses had high necks!

The summer she and a group of conservative township teachers took an inexpensive trip to Paris, she left the others to visit her childhood chum, Betty D'aurignac, who had married a Frenchman, and had a lovely apartment in Versailles.

Betty was delighted to see Mary Jane again, and although Betty was the same age as Mary Jane, she looked at least five years younger with her carefully marcelled hair, her arched

A Cute Trick!

She Was A Delicious Thawed

By ZITA

dark brows, her sensuous crimson lips, and her luscious breasts unconfined for a brassiere such as Mary Jane affected. Then too, Betty's delectable form was enhanced by a gorgeous clematis-pink negligee trimmed with white fur, which lay softly against her partially exposed breasts, and, as she sat smoking, with her bare legs crossed, there was an intriguing view of white flesh as revealed by her rose-shaded panties.

Mary Jane sat tall and stiff and proper in a chair opposite Betty, properly shocked at her friend's extravagant display of physical charms.

"So," remarked Betty, blowing a ring of smoke into the air, "you've never married?"

"Oh, no, Betty," responded Mary Jane evenly, pursing her unpainted lips, "I've been much too busy with my career!"

"Don't try to kid me, Mary Jane, I bet you've had a heck of a good time on the side."

"Oh," said Mary Jane, "I've attended lectures in the city, and various conferences and occasionally enjoyed a good Shakespearean play."

Betty snuffed out her cigarette and flung her exposed legs over the arm of the fireside chair. She threw back her carefully curled hair and burst

Morsel—When She Out...

ROMAINE

into laughter. "My stars, darling, if you could only see yourself!"

"Why, what's wrong?" Mary Jane looked down at her dark blue crepe skirt and her plain navy blue blouse with its severe white jabot.

"Everything, you precious idiot! Good heavens; concerts, lectures, dusty plays!" Betty suddenly looped forward and landed on her feet. She went to stand before Mary Jane. "Don't you ever go out with a man? Hasn't a man ever loved you? Showed you a good time?"

Mary Jane's face was immediately suffused with crimson. "Certainly not, Betty!" She sighed. "I guess I'm just not that type of girl! No man ever looks at me even once let alone a second time!"

"It's no wonder!" She bent over Mary Jane, and tucked her scented finger under her chin. She lifted her face up toward her own. "Listen, honey, you've got possibilities if only you'd give 'em half a chance. Let me fix you up and show you what a real good time is like!"

"Do—do you think I ought to, Betty? I'm a school-teacher you know, and the little dears look to me as a model—as one having the characteristics of a true lady!"

"All right, all right, that stuff is



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okay during school sessions but you're on your vacation now; aren't you?"

"Yes-s," Mary Jane admitted and felt just a little timid at what Betty would do to her.

"Come on into the bedroom with me." Betty grasped Mary Jane's soft, white hand¹ and yanked her to her feet. They² were both about the same height. Reluctantly she followed after her hostess.

"Take off your clothes, Mary Jane, I want to see your body." Betty flung herself upon the bed and rested her cheek in the palm of her hand.

Mary Jane looked horrified. "But—but, Betty," she protested, "I—I



couldn't do that; no one has seen me since I was a child!"

"Well, take it from me, sister, someone is going to see you about ten minutes from now! Off with that stuffy blouse!"

Obediently Mary Jane unpinned her jabot and unbuttoned her blouse slowly. She slipped her arms out of it and stood, feeling almost naked, in her corset-cover and skirt. She looked appealingly at Betty.

"Take off your skirt, nit-wit, and that darn muslin thing!" Betty slid her hand over her face to cover the expression of amusement she knew was there.

Mary Jane unhooked her skirt and stepped out of it. She unclasped her corset-cover and took that off, then resolutely she untied her petticoat and stepped out of that.

"Ye gods and little roaches," so-liloquized Betty, "she's got on honest to Gawd whale-bone corsets and old-fashioned muslin drawers!"

"Oh, Betty, do I have to take these off in front of you?" Mary Jane's face was the color of turkey flannel.

"Absolutely!"

Mary Jane was painfully self-conscious as she followed Betty's instructions and finally, she stood revealed in all her nakedness. Betty sat up with a start and sucked in her breath in profound admiration. "Why, Mary Jane Baldwin, you've a marvelous body!" She leaped to her feet to touch her friend intimately with her finger tips. "Covering up a body such as you have is what I call a crime! Now, get yourself in that bathroom and take a shower. I'll dry your back for you!"

Mary Jane, as free of clothes as the day she was born, marched like a little soldier into the bathroom and

took the prescribed bath in quick order. Soon Betty was in with her, drying her back and praising the natural beauty of her friend's form. She unfasted Mary Jane's lovely auburn hair and brushed it out until it curled about her shoulders.

Mary Jane braced herself as she became conscious of Betty's fingers sending delicious little thrills all over her body. High, firm, nicely rounded breasts she had. A carefully, indented waist which melted into hips and thighs that virile men lie awake dreaming about. Her legs too, were a poem in symmetrical proportions, and her posterior curves were a decided temptation.

Mary Jane was beginning to enjoy herself, as Betty held a pair of black lace pajama pants for her to step into, and then adjusted the top portion over her head, and tied the scarlet sash into a natty bow, and, as she was doing this, a strange brightness shot into her snappy brown eyes. Lines of amusement at her thoughts etched their way about her mouth. She straightened up and suddenly exclaimed:

"My stars and garter belt, Mary Jane, I forgot all about it!"

"Forgot all about what?"

"My date with Raymonde!"

"Raymonde? Why, Betty, I thought your husband's name was Henri?"

"My husband's name IS Henri, but my date isn't with my husband!"

"Oh, Betty, how terrible!" Mary Jane, having been brought up in a conventional one horse town, where she had lived all her life, was shocked at such a possibility.

"Variety, my dear," responded Betty quickly, as she took off her pink, fur-trimmed negligee and ex-

"Tonight, ma
violette, we have
one grand
time!"

all right, my dear, you go ahead."

"Listen, pet," instructed Betty, as
she drew sheer chiffon hose up over



posed her equally pink and white body, "is the spice of life! You know, darling," she glanced at her wrist watch, "I hate like anything to leave you alone in this apartment the first night of your visit, but I don't believe I can contact Raymonde, and I doubt if my host will care to have me bring an extra person. Do you care very much if I leave you like this?"

"Why, no, certainly not, Betty," said Mary Jane, happy to think that Betty hadn't insisted that she go on a wild party with her. "I'll be perfectly

her shapely legs and then fastened them in place with jeweled garters. "Henri is a traveling salesman for a perfume company as I told you. Well, he left for a two day trip to Paris, but, should he return unexpectedly, for heaven's sake entertain him to the best of your ability and don't tell him I went out with another man. I still love Henri very much, and he is SO generous!" Betty stepped into dainty silver slippers and then combed her hair into place after adjusting a becoming, backless, jade green gown of silver and satin.

"Goodness me," panted Mary Jane, "I do hope your Henri doesn't come home unexpectedly. I—I wouldn't know what to say to him and my French is atrocious!"

"One look at you," remarked Betty in a low voice, "and you won't have to say a darn thing!" Then louder: "There are magazines in the living room, there's the radio, there's a cake in the closet and enough alcoholic beverages in the ice chest, to keep you preserved for the rest of the year. Here's some cigarettes!" Betty tossed a package into Mary Jane's lap.

"Don't bother to think about me, Betty, I'll be all right, but I don't drink and certainly I don't smoke!"

"Don't get that hot, eh?" Betty yanked her silver cape from the closet.

"What did you say?"

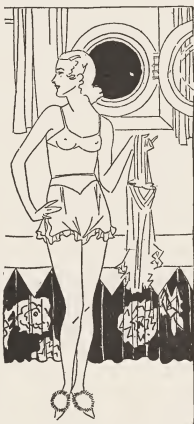
"Just talking to myself," evaded Betty, turning her back to Mary Jane to hide the twinkle in her eyes. "Good heavens, I'm a half hour late already. Bye!" She kissed Mary Jane and then was off and out of the apartment with a great slamming of doors.

Left alone, Mary Jane wandered into the richly appointed living room. She switched on the radio and listened for a few moments to a Spanish jazz orchestra playing in a cafe in the Bois, the latest American composition. A few moments later she switched it off, just as the clock chimed ten. Ten o'clock! Back in the States that had been her bedhour. School-teachers needed plenty of rest; their job was a nerve-wracking one.

Mary Jane gave herself to the luxury of a wide yawn. The divan looked just too inviting! She turned on a very dull bulb behind the nude dancing girl figure lamp, there on

the radio, and switched off the brilliant lights. The room was bathed in the deep shadows of night as she flung herself down on the divan.

A strange, sweet odor rose from Betty's pajamas. It had a disquieting effect upon Mary Jane. Dor-



*"Why, Mary, you've a
marvellous body!"*

mant desires were awakened within her, and, emotions were born which she had never imagined existed. She inhaled deeply of the scent. It seemed to soothe her and yet, at the same time irritate her sense. Strange

ideas pushed their way into her thoughts, but she resolutely tried to close her mind against them. She flopped over on her stomach and closed her eyes. Gradually the street noises and then the small sounds slipped quietly into oblivion and she slept.

Then—suddenly Mary Jane was brought back to acute consciousness by the scraping of the key in the lock. Instantly she was on her feet, her head reeling from her quick action. Was Betty back already? How long had she slept? The disquieting feeling was stranger upon her than previously. She opened her mouth to call out when a tall, masculine form entered the living room. She could just see it was a man by the help of the dim light behind the dancing girl lamp.

A feeling of fear permeated Mary Jane's being. Betty had said something about Henri's possibility of returning, and previously, when they had been talking together, she had also mentioned how jealous he was, in fact, Betty had laughed and had said: "If Henri ever found out that I was interested in another man, I think he would kill me!"

Kill Betty? Sweet, soft, dear little Betty? That would be terrible! Horrible! What should she do? She was the same height as Betty and perhaps, he wouldn't notice her hair was red instead of black. If only she could keep him from pushing the electric button. An icy blanket enveloped her! The man was advancing into the room. She'd have to speak; try to imitate Betty's voice.

"Why, darling," her voice sounded strange in her own ears, "I didn't expect YOU home tonight!"

"*Mais non, ma cher.*" he replied

in a deep rich baritone, "me, I didn't expect to be here tonight, but zen one nevair knows, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Oh, yes—yes of course," Mary Jane hastened to agree with him. "Here, let me take your things. I—I'll put them in on the bed." He handed her his hat and cloak. Nervously she took them into the perfumed darkness of the bedchamber. Hastily she came out to him again.

"Come, *petite fleur*," coaxed Henri, "sit here on ze divan and we weel talk, *oui?*"

Mary Jane felt like a different person. Her unconfined body felt deliciously *frée*, and then too, she was beginning to enjoy the gently swaying of her lovely breasts when she walked. She never had realized before a sensation could be so nice. Never, in her life, had she worn so little clothing in the presence of a gentleman. At least she hoped that Henri D'Aurignac WAS a gentleman! She must remember that she was Betty and NOT Mary Jane Baldwin of Harmony Hollow, U. S. A! So—she seated herself upon the divan next to Betty's husband.

Henri moved nearer her and slipped his arm about her thinly clad body, touching his leg against hers. His action awakened a brand new sensation which made Mary Jane tingle delightfully all over.

"*Ma cher*," he breathed, forcing her head backward and covering her quivering warm lips with his hungry mouth. He forced her lips apart and Mary Jane nearly fainted from the reaction. His hand stole under her arm and cupped her soft breasts, teasing her with the caressing sensation he inflicted upon her in that sensitive area.

"*Ma petit enfant*," he whispered

hoarsely, "you are so verry sweet to-night, so verry desirable, *oui!* He bent her backward so that her head rested upon the arm of the divan.

She must not fight against him, she told herself, and frankly admitted within her own mind that she didn't want to anyway. Henri's burning lips trailed down the length of her pulsating throat. His fingers busied themselves with the fastening of the top portion of her pajamas. Mary Jane held her breath in fearful and yet excited anticipation! He stripped the upper portion down from her body, sending delicious thrills cascading through her nervous system, as a result of his deft administration with his hands and lips. Dormant instincts that had been hidden and crushed for years came alive and made demands upon her.

For Betty's sake she must let him have his way with her. To stop him now would only arouse suspicion. She hunted around in her mind for an immediate solution to her problem because she was adult enough to know what the inevitable would be; but, she didn't hunt very hard, she was too thrilled at what was happening to even think. Still, she ought to stall him off for awhile. After all he WAS another woman's husband! And—while she was stalling perhaps Betty would return and they could, in some way, exchange places, and he'd never know his Betty had been cheating on him, so she asked:

"Darling, wouldn't you like me to mix you something to drink?" Betty had said there was bottled stuff in the ice chest.

"*La, la, petite enfant, zat ees an idea! You wish zat I should help you mix, zem, oui?*"

"Oh, no, no, no," she refused him

quickly, "you stay here and— and smoke. I'll be right back." She tried to find the upper portion of her pajamas but they were nowhere in evidence.

"No, you don't, *ma chere,*" Henri teased her, "now zat I haf got zem off, zey stay off!"

Mary Jane slipped out of his grasp and hurried down the tiny hall to the kitchenette, she found bottles of liquers, some ice cubes and the shaker. She had never, in all her life, made a cocktail so she emptied some out of each bottle into the shaker and mixed them well. She filled two tall glasses, placed them on a tray and reentered the living room. Henri took one of the tumblers and gulped it down.

"*Mon Dieu, cherie,* but zat was good!"

"Would you care for some more?"

"*Mais oui,*" Henri held his glass toward Mary Jane and she obediently trotted back into the kitchenette and then returned with the glassful she hadn't touched. He drained that off.

If only she could get him intoxicated then perhaps he'd fall asleep and everything would be all right. Emotions were still bubbling within her, but he did belong to Betty and—well, she must remember she was a school-teacher and teachers didn't go in for that sort of stuff.

She mixed more cocktails and again and again she filled his glass, but instead of becoming sleepy he seemed to be more wide awake. After her sixth trip he sat his glass down under the divan and drew her down beside him and then she realized that during one of her absences he must have gone into the bedroom and changed into a dressing gown. She felt frightened and yet eager and tempestuous!

Henri's wine-scented breath crept up her nostrils as his arms went about her and pressed her breasts against his hard, naked chest. "Oh, *ma cher, ma cher*, nevaïr haf you been like zis! Tonight, *ma violette*, we haf one grand time because you are such a—such a 'cute trick'!"



Mary Jane hated herself for the thoughts but she craved to have him kiss her and caress her. She seemed to have taken on a complete new personality. Her conventional self whispered to tell Henri the truth, but her new, reckless self, taunted her with the thoughts of Henri killing Betty for her unfaithfulness! She must go through with it, she must! She couldn't let Betty down now! She had gotten away with it so far, and surely she would carry the deception to a satisfactory conclusion!

Henri's strong arms slipped about

her, and Mary Jane felt herself being lifted into the air. "Ohhh, what are you doing?"

"Ze bed in ze ozer room, she weel be more comfortable, *oui!*"

Almost unconsciously Mary Jane slipped her arms about Henri's neck as he carried her into the warm darkness of the bedchamber. He laid her gently upon the pillow — a slight pause and then she was nestled in his muscular arms; his kisses had a devastating effect upon her, as did the adroit caress of his expertly proficient fingers.

So—this then was love! Mary Jane wondered if she would look any different when morning came. She wondered if the children would immediately see that she was no longer a shining example of the "Characteristics of a True Lady."

Words of endearment crept between Henri's lips as he enfolded her to him. She felt his inflaming strength saturating her soft, responsive body.

"Ohhh, my dear, my dear, my dear," she chattered nervously and then her sharp teeth sank into Henri's bare shoulder.

Before she had prayed that Betty would return, but now, she hoped she wouldn't show up for a week! Oh, but it was wonderful resting in Henri's arms there in the scented blackness, listening to their rapid heart-beats and the sound of their own quick breathing. Mary Jane was so very wide awake she thought that she would never sleep. . . . But finally, just before dawn, she fell into a deep slumber with a smile of contentment upon her well-kissed lips!

Mary Jane awakened when she became cognizant of the fact that someone was pinching her bare shoulder.

Slowly she opened her eyes and wondered what had happened. A dull red flush crept over her cheeks at the sight of the man sleeping there beside her. She turned her head and gave a start. She was looking in the amused face of Betty D'Aurignac!

"Mary Jane," reprimanded Betty in mock seriousness, "what is the meaning of all this?"

Mary Jane pushed the curling tendrils of her auburn hair back from her face. Her brown eyes were glazed with sleep as she stared at Betty and tried to explain. "You—you see, Betty," she whispered softly so as not to awaken Henri, "Your—

your husband came home unexpectedly last night. I—I just couldn't let you down and so, I pretended I was you! You said if Henri ever caught you out with another man he would kill you, and Betty, please believe me, I didn't want to be responsible for your murder!"

Betty laughed softly. She bent double with her laughing.

Mary blushed, "What's so darn funny?"

"Betty giggled some more and pointed to the sleeping man. "He isn't Henri, my husband, he is Pierre Dupont, a young friend of mine whom I sent to entertain you!"

GET THE RIGHT GIRL!

By King Simmons



*You can tell from a kiss
What a girl has to give,
If she'll lend enough bliss
To let your love live.*

*You can tell by the way
She meets your embrace
If she gives you her lips
And not only her face.*

*If she yields you her bosom
And knee to caress
And you feel her form tremble
With swift tenderness.*

*If she's crazy to kiss
And is eager to woo,
It's easy to know
She's the right girl for you!*



Hidden Night-Spot *in* Paris

*Where Strangers Came
For A Good Time!*

By

Roland Merceneaux

TO Kimberly, the sight of Paris again after all the years was like a spring tonic. He had been over with the A.E.F., and at the time was lucky enough to be assigned to duty in Paris after the hostilities were over. And did he have a good time? Ask him, just ask him.

"Well, Lafayette, we are here—again," he said with a happy smile, standing before the famous statue where he had gone immediately to pay his respects.

And later that afternoon dreaming over an *aperitif* along the *Boul'*

Miche, he congratulated himself upon the luck which had made it possible for him to save a few shekels out of the depression, permitting him a pleasant visit to Paris.

"What a town—what girls," he ruminated over his long drink. "I feel amorous, ready for adventure . . . tip-toe with desire to jump in the air, kick my heels together and shout!"

"*Monsieur* seems very happ-ee," a voice spoke softly behind him. Turning, Kimberly stared straight into the eyes of a wise French woman who seemed to have learned the oldest profession in the world, but who has

not neglected herself in the meanwhile. She wasn't very young, possibly in her early twenties, and her eyes were unhardened by life—still gleaming with the warm passion of a woman interested in loving and being loved.

"I am happ-ee," he mimicked. "Happ-ee to be here; to meet a lovely lady who speaks English, so why don't you join me for a drink and a chat?"

"Certainment!"

She got up at once and moved to his table, not without a smiling look

from loungers around the place. The waiter came over to them solicitiously, glad that the American had found himself a lady so quickly, and such a perfect specimen at that.

KIMBERLY belonged to the type of nervous men who were apt to do courageous things—and just as apt to become skittish at a small thing and fly into the air, rattled and lost. But he tried to hide this in his nature and usually succeeded, although there were times— Tonight he was perfectly at ease, sitting there in the



*"Certainment,
Monsieur,
come in
and
make
yourself
comfortable!"*

company of this charming woman.

They soon got to know each other like old friends—Mam'selle Desiree, or Dee for short; Monsieur Kimberly or Jack for even shorter acquaintanceship—and how she could murmur "Jack" with an accent that enticed you almost as much as the bewitching Mam'selle herself.

It was inevitable that they would eventually finish their drink and stroll along the boulevard until they found a little restaurant. She sat temptingly close to him, one hand lying idly on his knee under the table, her body pressed to his in that intimate way that fills a man's heart with the pride of possession. He put his arm around her chair so that his fingers rested in the bit of flesh showing above her lace collar, and he felt her tremble with the ecstasy of their nearness.

"Where shall we go now?" he asked after they partook of food and wine.

"Ah, Monsieur—where but to my home, *n'est ce pas?*"

The cab ride was a short one but Dee lost no time in throwing her arms about his neck once they were safely inside. She climbed up on his lap, kissing him feverishly, running her hand through his hair and tantalizing him with her warm closeness. He clasped her to him, kissing her hungrily, and her whole body responded. She snuggled closer and ran her fingers about his ear biting the tip of it gently with her lips folded over her teeth, so that little shivers raced up and down his spine. By the time they reached her doorway he was delirious with the joy of existence.

HER room was a marvel of mirrors!

Kimberly had never seen such a sight: mirrors everywhere! Even on

the floor, and as they moved about their reflections were caught up and thrown back again in succeeding pictures. A large couch stood against one wall, and, relaxing there Kimberly had the delight of seeing hundreds of beautiful women disrobing themselves — all reflected from the one exquisite creature whom he could reach out and touch with his own hands. In a moment she stood there in her stockings and underthings.

"Any more?" she asked.

"Plenty," he replied. "There is something so attractive about a woman in tasteful underwear, particularly one so willing to be—friendly?"

She gave a little laugh deep in her throat and ran to him open-armed and eager. He sank his mouth into hers and ran his hands over the luscious, yielding body that trembled against him. She seemed to be starved for affection. No matter what he did she liked it. He threw her back and kissed her shoulders, her arms, her breasts. They lost themselves in a whirlpool of emotion that would have ended only by his claiming all of her . . . had not he heard a strange noise that startled him! He jumped to his feet!

"Oh, that ees nothing," she said, flinging herself upon him, kissing him again and again. "Only my neighbors."

But Kimberly was experiencing a sudden sense of fear. He couldn't have explained it if his life depended upon it. The noise instead of dimming, suddenly exploded. It sounded as though someone were just outside, perhaps her husband—anyone—somebody trying to get in!

And before he realized it, he had darted through the door, out into the hallway and down the stairs. Her

cry behind him did nothing to improve his state of mind. He blundered in the dark, bumping his head and retreating from the scene just as though he had actually been discovered by a jealous husband, instead of yielding to his nerves like a child.

HE kept accusing himself for being the coward all that night. The following day he met an old friend.

"You? In Paris!" Tom shouted, rushing over to clasp his hand. "What a break. Boy we can have a swell time. Say, let's go to one of those peep shows tonight—you know, where you look through a hole in the wall and see sights."

Kimberly was glad to do anything to take his mind off his experience of the night before, so he quickly okayed the suggestion. That night they rode to an address that his friend had been given, and to which Kimberly paid no attention; however,

he did pick up his ears when they were shown seats before a wall and through a hole he caught a glimpse of the interior. *It was the same room he had occupied with Mamselle Desiree—mirrors and all!* And when he saw her enter with a chump, just like he did, and start to disrobe . . .

TO this day, his friend Tom wonders why Kimberly suddenly leaped to his feet in the darkness with a muttered curse and left him there. And when Tom tried to locate him later at his hotel, he learned that Kimberly had checked out and left no forwarding address. It might have been a mystery to him—but to Kimberly it was a headache that lasted a long time. All the while he was in Europe he wondered, when he met a stranger, if this was the one, or one of a party, who sat beyond that wall the night he thought he was *alone* with Mamselle Desiree . . .



A STOCKING IS ONE OF
THE REAL WONDERS OF
THIS WORLD, BECAUSE
IT HAS A BOTTOM AT
THE TOP!

Early to bed
Early to rise,
Makes a girl healthy—
But not so wise.

Mix Business with Pleasure

*And What Have You? A
New Kind of Snappy Tale
About Three Thrill-Seekers!*



By
ALLEN BECKFORD



HE business of the A. B. C. Detective Agency was so brisk that Muriel Allen of the "A" part and young Neil Barton of the "B" part, had time to play a leisurely game

of strip poker. Muriel had just gotten down to her brassiere, panties and hose, and Neil to his socks and shorts—when Limpy Chiappetti, who was the "C" part, pushed the buzzer indicating that a visitor was outside and wanted to see them.

"My stars and garter belt, Neil, gimme my clothes quick!" Muriel made a grab for her slippers, skirt and blouse while Neil hastily snatched his clothes from her.

"Do you think it's a customer or just a bill collector?" speculated Muriel as she adjusted her skirt in position.



"How the heck should I know?" counter-questioned Neil, as he stepped into his oxfords and put on his tie at the same time. "Ye gods, someone would have to drop in on us just when we were going good. Take it from me, Baby, my hopes were high!"

"Yeah, so I noticed," responded Muriel cryptically, as she ran the comb through her natural blonde

hair, and then stopped to pick up the deck of cards with which they had been playing.

The buzzer sounded again. "Ready, Muriel? All right to unlock the door?"

"Sure, Neil, sure!" Muriel scampered over to her typewriter. She inserted a sheet of paper and began thumbing: "Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party!"

Neil opened the door and admitted Limpy.

"A guy out there," Limpy said, as his eyes skipped over to where Muriel was busy typing, his hungry eyes absorbing all her intrinsic loveliness. "He says he's a representative from the Olympic Insurance Company. Name of Michael Cameron. Wants to know if we'll investigate the Jackson Jewelry store robbery, before they pay the insurance dough to Jackson."

"Send Mr. Cameron right in to see us, Limpy," directed the handsome Barton.

"Okay, Boss," and Limpy turned and dragged himself out of the office. Presently he re-opened the door and announced in a carefully modulated voice. "Mr. Cameron, sir." He was doing very well in correcting his speech under the tutorage of his Goddess, Miss Allen.

"Have a chair," indicated Neil to Cameron, and then he motioned with his hand toward Muriel, "my business associate, Miss Allen."

Cameron acknowledged the introduction and seated himself.

"Cigar?" Neil held a box toward his client.

Cameron took a handful, sticking one in his mouth and the balance in his pocket.

"Big shot outside," thought Muriel, "but I bet a cookie he doesn't call his soul his own when he's home with his missus." Cameron was a blue-eyed, sandy-haired little man with a great big voice.

Neil lighted Cameron's cigar for him. "Your company wants us to investigate the Jackson Jewelry store robbery, I believe," he began while Muriel listened, and crossed one leg over the other. Might just as well give the Irishman a treat. She took out her note-book and pencils, preparatory to taking notes on the case.

"Sure and that is what they sent me her to find out," Cameron puffed with evident enjoyment on his cigar. They were expensive!

"To tell you the truth, Mr. Barton," began the visitor, "we don't know much more than what you read in the papers. See?"

"We've read about the case, my partners and I," Neil told Cameron as he fished a cigarette from his case and lighted it. Muriel looked at it longingly but said nothing. It would not do to disillusion their prospective customers.

"Sure, sure, I thought you would have read about it. It was the noon hour. See? Only two clerks were in the store. A swell looking fellow with a black mustache, heavy dark eyebrows and black hair came into the jewelry shop. He wanted to see a complete set in rubies. You know, necklace, ear-rings, bracelets and rings. See?"

Barton brushed the ashes from his cigarette and nodded his head.

"Well, the man, according to the clerks, had the appearance of an up-town swell with lots of dough. The salesman, he brings out several trays of cheaper stones and settings but

nothing pleases the guy. He wants something more expensive. Well, only the day before, a shipment of set rubies had come in. My company insured 'em for fifty grand. The clerk, he opens the safe, see?"

Barton nodded again, while Muriel took down the conversation in short-hand.

"The clerk takes out the tray of newly insured set rubies and shows 'em to the G. The fake swell seems to like them and asks the price. It seems to suit him. Just about then he gets a terrible coughing fit. See?"

Muriel felt Mike Cameron's eyes upon the shapely contours of her legs, and thinking it was probably distracting his attention, she adroitly lowered her green dress.

"Well," continued the representative, "the G rushes to the front door of the place for a bit of fresh air. It was just a signal, see? He goes back to the counter and examines the rubies again. Just then, two birds walk into the store and start lookin' in at some watches. The other clerk goes up to them and then all hell starts poppin'. The swell gink pulls a sort of atomizer from his pocket and shoots some sort of stuff in the clerk's face, while the other two men do the same thing. Both clerks drop for the count, while the three guys swoop up the tray of insured rubies and skip. When Mr. Jackson and the other clerk return from lunch they find the two employees still a bit groggy—and the gems gone. See?"

"Is that all?" Barton inquired of Cameron who took his cigar out of his mouth and looked at it fondly.

"Yep, that's the works. You want to take the case?"

Muriel nodded her head at a glance from Barton.

"Yes," said Barton, "we'll take the case. Our retaining fee is five hundred dollars."

"Yeah," acknowledged Cameron, as he fumbled in his inner coat pocket. My company called your office before I started for here and found out your price. Here," he took a folded slip of paper from a flat bill folder, "is a check for that amount." He handed it to Barton, who carelessly tossed it upon his desk.

Muriel swept her hand across her mouth to hide her momentary smile of amusement. She instinctively knew that later he would cuddle it to him like a mother does her first child.

Michael Cameron rose to his feet. "This cigar," he observed, "is about the best I have ever smoked."

"Hum," commented Barton, as he extended the box toward his visitor. "Help yourself."

Cameron had a very large hand for such a little man. He managed to pick up eight cigars, which he quickly shoved into his coat pocket. "Thanks," he muttered appreciatively. "Well," he added, "I'll be on my way. Good luck to you." He gave Muriel a last smile and walked toward the door.

As soon as they were alone again, Muriel leaped up from her chair.

"Whoops, my dear," she cried softly to Neil as he too, got up from his chair, "I guess we eat at the Savoy this noon; eh, Big Boy?"

"No place else but—" grinned Neil, as he placed his arms about Muriel's shoulder and forced her into a couple of dance steps. "Five hundred berries, sweetheart, and if we can only get back the gems, we'll treat ourselves to a new spring outfit with some of the next money we receive."

Neil crushed her to him; his mouth

covered her sweet, provocative lips in a loving kiss as he strained her to him. Immediately her blood warmed within her. Dormant emotions were reawakened. Neil was so tall, so strong and compelling, she loved having him hold her this way.

"Lord, honey, but I love you," he whispered, "I do wish you could see things my way."

Muriel threw back her gorgeous head and laughed musically. "Perhaps I will—in time," she encouraged him. Then she sobered and said:

"What are you going to do first about this case?"

"We'll interview Jackson and his clerks to begin with," decided Barton.

"But first," protested Muriel, "we'll have lunch."

"Your mind," he teased her, "seems to be running to food, and if," he continued, "you aren't careful, your present wonderful curves will be running together."

"Who cares?" questioned Muriel as she tore herself out of his arms. To have remained much longer, would have been dangerous. "Come on, we've got to tell Limpy the good news."

MMR. Lawrence Jackson, sole owner and proprietor of that rather exclusive Jackson Jewelry Shop, was a tall man. Taller even than Neil; who was a six footer. Mr. Jackson was very much perturbed over the loss of the valuable gems.

In the privacy of his luxuriously appointed office, he was saying to Muriel and young Barton:

"—I have never, in all my twenty years as a jeweler, experienced a similar outrage. I am delighted however," he continued, "to think that

(Continued on page 62)

















WANT AD—

*I want a girl who's hard to get,
Someone who's not too quick to
pet;*

*Whose cagey way when I implore
Just makes me want her all the
more.*

*Who'll deftly parry and resist
Almost as if she'd go unkissed;*

*Until my lips have found hers too,
She trembles—and knows what to
do!*



ALIKE *in* the DARK

By
NEVIL
WEST

*Love
Is Blind—
Especially
in
The Dark!*



THE man was thrillingly good looking, and Janice Jarmon felt her heart playing strange, little fluttering tricks when Madame Nicolette Clarveau made the introduction which brought them together.

Janice—she was beginning to regret the Mrs. that prefixed her name—had visited Madame Clarveau for the first time that afternoon. She had gone to the Clarveau chateau not because she felt she would enjoy the visit, but because she knew no one in Paris, and some friends back in Iowa had given her a letter of introduction. Had she known that Madame Clarveau possessed such a handsome nephew, she would not have waited a week before presenting herself at the Clarveau chateau.

"My nephew, Raoul," Madame Clarveau had said when the good

looking, immaculately dressed young man strolled into the room where tea and cakes, instead of cocktails, were being served.

Raoul was just what Janice had always pictured a Frenchman should be, but the first of the species she had seen since arriving in Paris. Most of the others had looked not unlike residents of Des Moines.

But Raoul was French as the movies have presented the suave Parisian. He was clad in the latest mode for men, and with a physique that was a delight to the eyes of tailors and lonely maidens. He looked down at Janice with dark eyes in which flickering lights danced recklessly. He held her slim white hand a moment longer than was necessary, and made the gesture seem pregnant with many delightfully forbidden things.

"You must pardon my aunt for her delay in introducing us," he said. "She is so accustomed to exquisite things that she forgets my appreciation of them."

Janice felt as though she was going to blush, but it had been so long ago since she had blushed that she had lost the art.

"Monsieur is so droll," she remarked. "After meeting him, one can understand the gaiety that has attached itself to Paris."

"Madame wrongs me by assuming it is drollery," Raoul quickly defended himself. "And I fear it will take the balance of the afternoon for me to completely correct that

false impression. Since Madame is leaving, might I start now by offering to take her home?"

Janice didn't know whether or not it would be a good idea to trust herself alone with such a thrilling young man. But she *did* know that it would be interesting. And as she remembered that her husband, Ken, had been neglecting her shamelessly since their arrival in Paris, and since she recalled her lonely week in the world's gayest city, she nodded agreement.

"Sometimes I am quite dense, Monsieur," she said. "It may take more than just the afternoon to convince me of your sincerity."

"Heaven is being most kind to this unworthy person," Raoul murmured gratefully.

TWENTY minutes later they were in the midst of the traffic congestion at the intersection of the Avenue L'Opera and the Rue de la Paix, riding in Raoul's roadster.

"I dare say my well meaning aunt gave you tea instead of a cocktail because someone once told her a fairy tale about America not selling liquor in some places," Raoul remarked.

"She did," laughed Janice. "And I had to pretend to like it."

"Then the hospitality of Paris is at stake and I must defend it," announced Raoul. "There is an excellent little cafe just around the corner on the Rue Coumartin where some rare vintages will wash the flavor of tea from your lips. Ma-

dame will grant me this opportunity to prove to her that Paris is not as my aunt has led her to believe?"

Janice hesitated, but only long enough to remind herself that this is Paris, and that Americans would not be recognized in that city if they acted like prudes. She also reminded herself that Ken was probably not showing any scruples against being seen in cafes with strange women. She was also aware of the fact that she liked the mistake Raoul had made in dropping his hand on her knee instead of the gear shift of the car as he waited for her answer.

"Rare vintages sounds interesting," she declared. "Even some Iowa corn likker would go good right now."

"Corn likker? Madame would have us both intoxicated in half an hour?" Raoul laughed, and proved that he hadn't mistaken her knee for the gear shift by giving it several caressing pats that sent shivers of delight through Janice. "*Hola!* I could think of nothing more interesting. But it might be best to experiment first with wine—perhaps a bit of Burgundy, unless Madame has a preference for Benedictine."

Janice, who had been in Paris long enough to know her wines, shook her head. "Burgundy would be best, Monsieur," she requested. "Benedictine is a bit too oily—and mild!"

Raoul laughed in his reckless, care-free manner and permitted his hand to caress much of her perfectly moulded, silken calf as it dropped from her knee. He assured her that her remarks were so nearly sacreligious that one might mistake her for a Parisian. Then he drove the roadster up before a small, terraced cafe and led her to a table beneath a gaudy parasol.

"Now to resume our discussion on drollery, Madame," Raoul declared after the *garçon* had filled their order.

"Unless, Monsieur," Janice replied. "It is more interesting, and less dangerous, to assume that it is drollery."

"Madame is afraid of the danger of taking me seriously?" Raoul asked as he leaned slightly across the table.

Janice looked quickly away, for the light in his eyes made a woman anything but responsible for what she might say while looking at him. And Janice was still less than twenty-five, with a knowledge that she was attractive to men like Raoul, and that she wanted to enjoy life—with men like Raoul.

As she avoided his eyes, she noted toward the far end of the terrace, a man and a woman just rising from one of the tables—a gasp escaped her lips as she recognized them. It was her husband, Ken, and her maid, Francine! Ken, who had told her that he was remaining at the *pension* apartment because he had some correspondence to attend to; and Francine, her attractive Parisian maid, who should have been busy at the apartment with domestic duties.

Ken appeared very attentive as he helped the vivacious Francine into a cab. Ken, Janice thought, was displaying what is supposed to be the prerogative of an American in Paris.

THERE was neither condemnation nor anger in Janice's eyes, however, as she watched them drive away. She was of the younger generation, and understood that one adopted a holiday spirit—especially a holiday from matrimony—when in Paris. But she reminded herself that what was sauce for the husband could also be a bit of salad dressing for the wife.

So she turned back to Raoul with an engaging smile.

"Monsieur was saying something about danger, I believe," she remarked.

"*Oui*, but it a discussion better suited for the privacy of Madame's home than the terrace of a cafe," Raoul said, watching her closely and anxiously.

Madame!" Raoul answered quickly.

Janice smiled dreamily. It looked as though her loneliness in Paris was soon to end.

She had merely guessed, when she said that her husband would be away for the evening. But Janice had been judging Ken by his conduct since their arrival in Paris. Ken had found much to interest him—away from home.



Janice hesitated for a tantalizing moment, even though she knew what her answer would be. But she could see no need to spoil the adventure by appearing to agree too readily. Raoul might not display all his technique if he thought he could obtain an easy conquest.

"The maid retires at 10 o'clock, and my husband will be away until after midnight," Janice mused aloud. "And Francine is very neglectful about locking the apartment door. Monsieur understands the carelessness of maids about such matters?"

"Understands — and appreciates,

NOR was her surmise wrong — shortly after dinner at eight, Ken Ken announced that he had an engagement that was very pressing and would have to dash off. He expressed his regrets at not being able to take her along and hoped she would be able to find something to amuse her while he was gone. Janice replied that she might also go out; that would give her an alibi, she reflected, in case some gossip should report to him that a strange man had been seen entering the apartment.

She thought she noticed an exchange of pleased expressions pass



between Ken and Francine, who had served dinner, but pretended not to notice. But Janice felt certain that they had planned a tryst somewhere for that evening.

After Ken had left, she watched Francine; but the maid went to her room instead of asking for the evening off. But later Janice thought she heard the apartment door open and close very softly, and felt positive her maid would not respond if called. But she was satisfied. This left the apartment empty for the arrival of Raoul.

Going to her boudoir, Janice undressed slowly. As the last vestige of clothing fell in a silken heap about her trim ankles, she appraised her figure in a full length mirror. It revealed the ripe maturity of a woman of twenty-four, pulsating with health and a vigorous desire for life. Vaguely she wondered why Ken had tired of her. Were Francine's shoulders more perfectly rounded and more delicately colored than hers? Did Francine have better developed breasts than hers which stood out so proudly? Were Francine's hips more

intriguingly contoured, and did she have better shaped legs than the curving thighs and tapering calves reflected in the mirror?

Janice was satisfied that she was equally as attractive as the youthful Francine. Perhaps more so. But men are strange creatures, she reminded herself. What was hemlock to one could be nectar to another. Now to Raoul—

She smiled at the thought of his name, and wondered what would be his reaction if he ever chanced to glimpse the creamy white body in the mirror. In order that there might be a chance of that happening, she cast aside the seductive, décolleté gown she had selected to wear during the evening, and wrapped about her soft body a negligee of webby silk that was almost transparent and clung caressingly to the full, rich curves of her hips and breasts.

Janice had intended serving cocktails and engaging merely in a bit of gay banter with Raoul, but instead she stepped into the library, switched out the electric light and dropped down upon a chaise longue. It would be more interesting to pretend she had forgotten the engagement with Raoul and permit him to find her in such an interesting condition than it would be to dress in a décolleté gown and tantalize him as they sipped cocktails.

In the hall a tall clock was solemnly chiming the hour of nine. An hour to wait until Raoul arrived. But Janice found it pleasant to lie upon the chaise longue in the darkness and amuse herself with imagining what he would do and say when he arrived and discovered her. She knew she was playing with fire, and was careful to remove her own ac-

tions from the mental pictures. It would be better and more interesting to yield to any impulse Raoul might arouse in her than to plan definite action. Yet she felt certain just what those impulses would be. . . .

IN her anticipation of Raoul's visit, Janice did not think she could possibly fall asleep. But she did! When the venerable clock in the hall solemnly chimed the half hour she was softly slumbering. Yet she had not slept more than fifteen minutes when she was awakened to find herself in the strong, possessive arms of a man.

"*Amour!*" whispered a voice husky with emotion, as the warm breath hungrily fanned her cheek. "*Amour! Ma belle trésor!*" It was almost a love song, the way the husky voice whispered it. Then a pair of firm, eager lips were pressed avidly against hers in a warm, searing kiss, while his hands fondled her thinly clad body caressingly. Raoul was losing no time in his prelude to love, eh?

The kiss tingled thrillingly through every responsive chord as Janice pressed herself hungrily closer to him. She had not realized before how very lonely and starved for love she had been. It was forbidden folly, this adventure in the dark with Raoul—yet so—so delightful!

Passively she remained in his arms, hungering for more and more of those thrilling kisses as she abandoned herself to the demands of his hands and lips. Nor was she kept waiting for them. She was in the arms of one who knew the full technique of the osculatory art, and was receiving a complete demonstration of his ability—if not an advanced course in it!

The webby negligee slipped from

her shoulders, and under the gentle pressure of firm, masculine hands, was dropped to her waist. But Janice offered no protests, and convulsed her body in a manner to help the disrobing hands. After the neglect she had known so recently from Ken, it was like a return to heaven to be caressed with affectionate hands and burning lips.

An absence from the joys of love had increased her appreciation of them, and each fresh, searing kiss, whether on her lips or other interesting parts of her much exposed anatomy, sent further thrills of delight coursing through her.

The negligee had slipped down from her hips and had fallen in a neglected heap at the side of the chaise longue, and the man was slowly easing her back among the soft pillows—when voices in the adjoining room interrupted them. . . .

"Ah, you are the most wonderful creature in the world, my Janice!" said a masculine voice.

Janice's gasp of amazement echoed with that of the man who was holding her.

"Who is that in there with my wife?" he demanded.

Janice gasped again! So—it was *not* Raoul who had slipped the negligee from her body and was holding her in his arms, administering soul-stirring kisses—it was her husband, Ken!

Slowly Janice reached up and switched on the light above the chaise longue so that the radiance fell upon her face and his.

"Janice!" he exclaimed.

"Didn't you know it was me?" Janice asked, with assumed innocence.

"Why—ah—yes, of course!" Ken stammered. "But—ah—when I heard someone in the adjoining room mention your name, I thought I had made a mistake in the dark."

"It's just probably someone who is visiting Francine," Janice answered. "Maybe someone who likes the name of Janice better than Francine. Do you want to go in and disturb them?"

KEN hesitated as he stood looking down at the dazzling glory of her nude body, bathed so temptingly in the subdued light. A smouldering desire in his eyes rapidly fanned into flame as he studied her exposed breasts and the smooth curves of her unclad figure. And as he recalled the fire he had encountered in her lips, he wondered if he could ever interest himself again in Francine. Slowly he dropped down beside her on the chaise longue and took her in his arms.

"I don't want to go anywhere," he said. "All I want is to remain right here—with you!"

Janice smiled as he surrendered her lips to him and nestled her body warmly against him. It was going to be amusing when Raoul discovered he was making love to her maid, she reflected. Yet as she remembered the sophisticated way he had acted, she thought that possibly he would be satisfied. Francine *was* attractive — also, mistakes will happen in the dark! . . .

"He now calls his girl friend 'baseball'."

"Why?"

"Because she won't play without a diamond!"

Just ONE NIGHT

"... as Michael and Marie we will spend twenty-four hours together, then we will part forever—"

By S. W. PAUL

MICHAEL SHAUGHNESSY CLANART, Marquis de Montreuil, sat on the terrace of the *Rotonde*, moodily sipping his morning aperitif. The red of

his hair put the ruddy tinge of the liquor to shame, but his blue eyes were clouded and his air was one of misery. This in spite of the fact that he had a luncheon engagement with the only daughter of the second richest man in America. . . .

Michael had come to Paris for the first time in five years with the sole purpose of meeting, wooing, and marrying an American heiress who would offer a substantial sum in exchange for his title—this procedure was by no means uncommon among the impoverished families of the French nobility. But the same Irish strain which was responsible for Mi-



chael's name, his hair and eyes, made him feel a reluctance to such a union . . . a reluctance very unusual in the Continental make-up—

Michael's gloomy reverie was suddenly disturbed by the scrape of a chair as someone sat down at the

tiny table. He raised his eyes and sat up as if electrified. Across from him was the prettiest girl he had ever seen! Dressed simply but with the utmost *chic*, she was a vision of Gallic charm. Raven black hair peeped in glossy curls beneath the close-fitting turban. Her big, black eyes



had just the tiniest upward tilt at the corners, and the warmly tinted skin had the dusky bloom of a ripe peach. The luscious lips were of a cherry red. Her body was divinely molded, displaying all the opulent allure of which the French are so justly proud. Michael felt a strong desire to peep beneath the table and

see whether the legs matched the enchanting grace of her figure.

The girl's eyes were dancing with excitement as she spoke. "*Monsieur je vous prie. . .*" A flood of rapid French followed.

Michael sat silent, still to stunned by this gorgeous apparition to answer. Perplexed, the girl hesitated for a moment, then leaned forward with an exclamation, spoke in English this time.

"Ah, *Monsieur* is American — he does not speak French?"

Michael allowed the half-questioning statement to pass unchallenged and she continued hurriedly.

"Please you must help me! A gentleman—a friend of mine—is coming around the corner very soon. He has seen me—if I am alone, he will invite me for a drive, to luncheon—but if I have a companion, then he cannot ask me to come with him . . . and I detest him, *Monsieur!*"

A slim hand, finger nails pink lacquered, rested appealingly on Michael's arm. All his innate gallantry awoke at last, made him realize how rudely he was staring, and broke the tongue-tied spell the strange beauty had cast upon him.

"But of course, *Mademoiselle*—anything I can do. . ."

"Oh, thank you!" Her eyes were warmly glowing.

The pressure of her fingers on his arms tightened.

"Here he comes now! You must talk with me—laugh with me, *Monsieur*. You have known me . . . oh, for years!"

Her infectious laughter trilled gaily as she broke into animated conversation. Michael had been on the point of introducing himself, but now he fell into the spirit of the thing. Let

her think he was American — what of it? He spoke English as well as his native French.

He ordered for her and they chattered away absorbedly. The unwelcome gentleman friend went away discomfited and was forgotten, as was Michael's luncheon engagement. They laughingly discussed the pictures hung in the sidewalk exhibition by shabby artists of the Quarter, who could not afford the fee for space in one of the galleries.

With every moment, Michael became more deeply enamored of the fascinating creature opposite him, and judging by the sidelong glances she sent from beneath her long lashes, she did not find his lithe masculinity unattractive. Michael had put her down as a mannequin, or perhaps a *midinette*, from one of the great *couturieres*. Many of them learned to speak fluent English in the salons patronized largely by American women. There had hardly been time to think further along that line, nor, truth to tell, was Michael much concerned with her identity. She had introduced herself as Marie—he had similarly announced himself as Michael—and on that basis of easy informality they had proceeded exactly like the intimate friends they were portraying.

Now, suddenly conscious of the passage of time, Marie arose. "Oh, it is late—I must go!"

Michael sprang to his feet, sputtering frenzied protests. "But you must not—you can not—will you leave me desolate? I do not even know who you are!"

She paused, considering him gravely beneath delicately arched brows. Unable to resist the ardent appeal so eloquently blazing from Michael's eyes, she nodded in sudden decision.

"I, too, do not wish to part—so soon," she confided frankly. "When we say goodbye, it must be forever. Do not ask me why . . . it is so. However, I will remain—we can be together for twenty-four hours — on one condition!"

Eagerly Michael hastened to consent.

"Anything you say — only name it!"

Slowly she replied. "You must ask me nothing about myself — neither who or what I am, whence I came, or where I go. Nor will I ask anything concerning you. As Michael and Marie we will spend one happy day together before we part—"

The mystery behind her words reminded Michael of his own problem—his own secret—the knowledge of the undesired but necessary marriage which lay in the near future. Perhaps it was better as Marie wished it. One glorious day of joy—one last ecstatic draught from the brimming cup of life—and then goodbye, with only a precious memory to treasure.

"So be it, O Master," he chanted with mock gravity. They burst into gay laughter together and strolled away arm in arm along the *Boul' Mich'*.

THROUGH the narrow, crooked,

Old World streets of the Quarter they wandered, happy as two little children. They laughed at everything, and at nothing. And everyone, in turn, laughed with them. Patriarchal café proprietors with flowing white beards, gay young students, matronly *pensionnaires*, all beamed.

They rambled across the *Pont Concorde* into the *Champs Elysées*. Glittering shops, the Mecca of smart women from all over the world, lined

the broad avenue. Michael half-expected some "gold digging" from his companion, either in the form of a thinly veiled hint, or an outright request. Such was the usual procedure of French girls of her class when escorted by an admirer through this district. But Marie amazed and delighted him by doing nothing of the sort. With a reckless disregard for the scanty store of francs in his pocket, he insisted that she permit him to present some little trinket. She chose at last a gay pair of garters, gemmed with tiny brilliants. As she tucked the parcel into her bag, she glanced at him with a quizzical glint in her eyes.

"Later—perhaps—there will be a little surprise for you, Michael."

She evaded his questions, laughed when he tried to bully her into an explanation.

"No, no, young man! Later, I said!"

They passed the magnificent *Arc de Triomphe*, reached the *Bois*. Arrow straight before them stretched the *Avenue des Acacias*, famed society promenade. Michael found Marie a far more attractive sight than the glittering throng. The vivacious flush on her cheeks, the bright sparkle in her eyes, were irresistible. He drew her down one of the tiny paths branching off through the trees, and she followed not unwillingly.

A silence fell between them, and they strolled, hands linked far into the wood. In a tiny glade, they stopped to rest; Marie sat on a fallen log while Michael dropped on the mossy ground at her feet. She smiled happily down at him, rumpling his hair affectionately with one hand. The noise from the Avenue came to them only as a faint hum. Michael caught

her hand, imprisoned it in his.

"It's wonderful here, isn't it?"

"Yes, Michael."

He sat up suddenly. "How about my surprise?"

She smiled. "All right."

From her bag she took the garters Michael had bought, handed him the packet.

"When a French girl receives a pretty gift from a man, she allows him to put in on her . . . if," she continued softly, "she cares for him."

In an instant, Michael was on his knees beside her, his arms enfolding her soft loveliness. She lifted her lips in sweet surrender, and his mouth merged with hers in a blinding, fervent kiss.

A little later, Marie put her hands against Michael's chest and pushed him away from her.

"Don't you want your surprise?" she demanded.

"Of course," Michael nodded, his eyes hungrily devouring her lovely flushed face, her delightful tumbled hair, her full, rounded bosom, heaving beneath the snugly fitting bodice of her dress.

She extended her leg, pulling her skirt far above her knees. Michael's fingers trembled a little as he fumbled with the wrappings of the package.

"Hurry now, clumsy," she scolded. "How do you expect to ever open it without looking at it?"

But Michael could not take his eyes from the alluring picture of her silk clad legs. Her feet were small and well shaped, her ankles slender. The curves of calf and thigh were voluptuously full. At length, the garters were free of the entangling paper, and Michael slowly, slowly slipped one over her foot. A tingling thrill ran through him as his hands brushed the

silky smoothness of her leg, and rested for an instant on the satiny skin above the stocking top. Marie extended the other leg, he slipped the garter on. She held her legs out admiring the new accessories. Impetuously Michael stooped, and pressed his eager lips to the smooth flesh of her thigh.

"Oh, Michael!" Marie's voice quivered, but when Michael raised his burning gaze, her eyes returned the ardor of his look. Bending her full, red lips to his, she slipped her arms

She silenced him with a slim finger on his lips. "Remember, Michael dear, you promised."

THEY had traveled quite a distance in their ramble, and as a strain of music came faintly to them, Michael recognized its source at once.

"*Pré Catelan*," he exclaimed. "Let's stop for cocktails!"

At the renowned resort in the heart of the *Bois*, they sipped their drinks and danced to the tantalizing melodies from an excellent jazz band. As they



about his neck. Fervently they clung together, Michael's hand caressing the warm curves of her figure.

With a long, tremulous intake of breath, Marie gently disengaged herself from his grasp. "Come, Michael—we must go. It will be dark soon—and our twenty-four hours are slipping by."

The reference to the agreement between them sobered them both. In silence Michael waited while Marie arranged her dishevelled hair and rumpled clothing, and in silence they made their way through the darkening wood. Only once Michael burst forth. "Marie, darling—why must you . . .?"

glided about the sumptuously decorated room, Michael could feel the warm rise and fall of her bosom against his chest. Her head rested lightly on his shoulder, the silky cloud of her hair brushing his lips and cheek. A subtly enticing scent rose from her, filling Michael's nostrils and exciting him immeasurably.

Lights were twinkling when they emerged from *Pré Catelan*.

"Well, little one, it's time to be thinking of dinner," Michael announced. "How about the Ritz? Or shall it be Claridge's?"

These were the smartest places to dine in Paris. And what was more important in view of Michael's rapidly

dwindling resources, both were frightfully expensive. But nothing was too good for this glorious girl at his side, Michael reflected. Was it not but a few short hours more before she went out of his life forever, leaving him to face a drab existence as the husband of some stodgy American heiress, dull and heavy like her miserable dollars?

Marie, however, negatived his suggestion.

"Ah, you Americans — all alike! You cannot enjoy your meal unless there are crowds — unless there is noise—unless you pay a terrific price for everything! I will take charge of this little expedition from here on! First, we go to the *Auberge du Vert Galant* for *poule au pot*.

By a stroke of good fortune, they found a cab which had just discharged its passengers, and were quickly rolling toward the bright lights of the city. Sympathetically, their chauffeur drove slowly through the shadowy *Bois*, reserving the reckless speed characteristic of his tribe for the heavy traffic of the city streets. Michael tasted rapturous intimacies in the darkened taxi, and all too soon they drew up before the restaurant.

Reproducing faithfully the atmosphere of a mediaeval inn, the *Auberge* was a place of quiet charm and color. The *poule au pot*, or chicken in the pot, its specialty, was delicious. Michael and Marie enjoyed a leisurely repast with all the savor of real *gourmets*. With a deep sigh of satisfaction, Michael drained his *Vouvray*, set down the empty wine cup.

"Where now, my captain?"

Marie smiled back at him.

"Why such a hurry?"

"Oh, no hurry," he shrugged, but his eager, dancing eyes belied his nonchalance.

"Come, then." She rose.

Michael settled the account and followed her. Outside, Marie hooked her arm through his, and led him off along the *Quai*.

"Is it permitted to know our destination beloved tyrant?" he inquired humbly.

Marie sent a long look at him, her eyes wide and shining with promise, before she answered.

"To—my apartment."

Michael asked no further questions. The simple words sent a tingling shock through his veins. Quietly he walked along beside her, very conscious of the soft arm locked against his side.

THE walk was a short one. They stopped before a tall, old house in the Quarter. The grizzled *conciierge* nodded, and mumbled a greeting to Marie from behind his walrus-like mustache. Up three narrow, winding flights of stairs they climbed, and then Marie unlocked a door and ushered Michael over the threshold.

"Welcome, *Monsieur*," she cried.

"Welcome to our city!"

Gaily she conducted him about the apartment. Small and cozy, it was tastefully appointed.

"This, *Monsieur*, is the Blue Room. Don't you see the blue pillow on the couch? And that blue spot on the ceiling there?" They both laughed.

"This," she continued whimsically, at the door of a tiny cubicle of a kitchen, "is the department *de cuisine*. Unfortunately, our chef is on vacation at present."

Laughing, she sank down beside him on the wide studio couch. "And how do you like my palace?"

Gravely Michael replied. "It must be a palace indeed, for is it not in-



habited by a queen?"

He reached out his arms, and she melted into them, her head thrown

back, her eyes half closed. Murmuring endearments, he kissed her, tenderly at first, then more fiercely as a mounting tide of desire swept over him. Nor did Marie remain passive for long. She returned his fiery embraces, met his burning caresses with a savage intensity of her own. Almost beside himself with desire, Michael lifted her in his arms, strode toward the bedroom.

"No, no, Michael! Stop!" She beat at his chest with balled fists.

He stopped, puzzled. "Marie — darling—I love you!" His voice was hoarse with emotion.

"And I you, Michael," she panted. "But please, put me down now—"

He set her on her feet, and drew a husky breath. Marie ran to a little cabinet, took out glasses, bottles. Then she darted into her bedroom, emerged with a silk dressing gown.

"Here, Michael, you can wear this. Now, mix yourself something to drink, like a good boy, and give me time to settle myself. In ten minutes you can come in." She blew him a kiss from the bedroom door, and closed it behind her.

Michael slipped into the dressing gown; he laughed at the picture he made in it. It reached only a little below his knees, and the lace trimmed collar was an incongruous touch beneath his square-cut, masculine chin. He mixed himself a whiskey and soda, tossed it off, walked restlessly up and down the room. His blood was on fire, it was impossible for him to keep still. Fifty times he glanced at the little enameled clock on the mantle. At last, before the black minute hand quite touched the appointed mark, he opened the door—

A startled exclamation came from Marie . . . she was in the act of slip-

ping into pajama trousers, one leg partly raised. Her gorgeous body was entirely nude. Michael gasped as the dazzling revelation of her fully exposed charms struck him. One swift step and he was beside her, crushed his fevered lips to hers, felt her full, throbbing breasts warm against his chest. The wide, floppy pajama trousers slithered softly to the floor—were forgotten as Michael bore his palpitating burden to the bed. . . .

It was nearly dawn when, tired and blissful, Michael drifted off to sleep. Marie's tousled curls were nestled into the hollow between his arm and side. She was snuggled up against him like a little child. The last thing he remembered of that night of ecstasy was mumbling brokenly into her ear. "Mustn't go — mustn't go—Michael won't let you."

He awoke with the consciousness

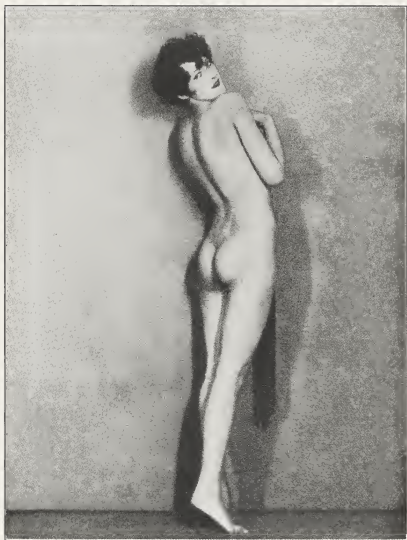
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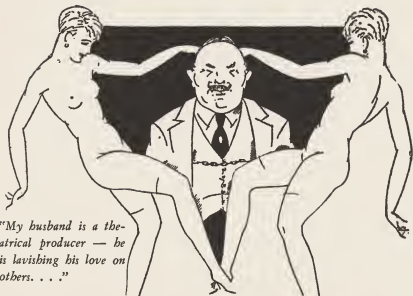








By WALTER BRONSON



"My husband is a theatrical producer — he is lavishing his love on others. . . ."

Divorce Intrigue



IT appeared that Sally expected him to have black whiskers. She was under the impression that all French attorneys wore black whiskers. So it was quite a surprise to her when she discovered that Richard Despard was not only clean-shaven, but young and darned good-looking into the bargain.

She walked in Richard Despard's law-office in a hesitant manner and a fetching Lanvin frock of appliqued silk. Both the hesitant manner and the frock were exceedingly becoming to Sally, who had golden hair, azure

eyes and a figure like seven million dollars.

"I—I am seeking Monsieur Despard," she said in her halting French.

The smooth-shaven, good-looking young man bowed politely. He smiled. "I am Monsieur Despard," he answered. "Will you sit down, *Mademoiselle*?" And he held a chair for her.

Sally's lovely eyes widened. "You are Monsieur Despard, the attorney—the *avocat*?"

"*Oui, Mademoiselle*. Is there some legal thing about which I might render you a service?"

Sally hesitated some more. Then,

abruptly took the plunge. "Yes. There is something in which I need your advice!" she spoke swiftly. "I — I want to find out about divorcing my husband!"

Despard's black eyebrows rose. "You are married, *Mademoiselle*—or rather, *Madame*?" He seemed startled, surprised.

Sally nodded. "I am the wife of Henri Duvalle, the theatrical producer."

"And you wish to divorce Monsieur Duvalle?"

Sally nodded with determination. "*Oui*."

"*Mais*—on what grounds?"

Sally looked about the little law-office, as if fearful of being overheard. But there was nobody present except herself and the handsome Richard Despard. So she unburdened her unhappiness without further ado. "My husband," she announced, "is unfaithful to me."

Despard stared at her. "It is difficult to imagine anyone so foolish as to be unfaithful to one so charming and lovely as yourself, *Madame*!" he said slowly. And his eyes drank in the charming contours of her sleek hips, and the revealed expanse of chiffon-clad leg where she sat with knees crossed in front of his desk.

Sally flushed at the complimentary tenor of his words and his ocular survey of her charms. Somehow, his gaze seemed to penetrate through the Lanvin frock, as if feasting upon the dainties beneath the appliqued silk. And for some inexplicable reason, Sally discerned no offense in his stare. Rather, it gave her a momentary and secret sensation of pleasure. . . .

"Perhaps I had better commence from the beginning," she said at last. "You see, I am American. I came to

Paris eight months ago, and met Henri Duvalle. He . . . well, he swept me off my feet; rushed me to death. And I married him, ultimately. At once, I realized that it had not been love I held for him; not true love. It had been merely an infatuation. But—there I was, married to him; and for a brief time, I was happy enough."

Richard Despard nodded gently. "Continue, *s'il vous plait*."

"Well," Sally went on ruefully, "the marriage soon became very humdrum and monotonous. Henri—Monsieur Duvalle—soon seemed to lose interest in me. He grew cold, distant. I could not understand why until just a few days ago. And then I found out—"

"*Oui, Madame*. You found out that he was being unfaithful to you? That he was lavishing upon another woman the love that he should have showered on you?"

Sally nodded, and her azure eyes glistened a little with unhappiness.

Despard smiled, reached forward and patted her shoulder. The touch of his hand sent little tingling thrills dancing through Sally's veins, she didn't know why. Then the attorney said: "*Mais*—it is a very simple thing! We shall get evidence of your husband's . . . er, indiscretions; and then we shall file suit for divorce, using that evidence as grounds for the decree."

Sally shook her head. "It isn't quite as easy as that, Monsieur Despard."

"*Pourquoi*—why not?"

"I—I came right out; accused him of cheating on me, and he laughed in my face. He defied me to get anything on him. While he privately admitted to me that he had another woman, he boasted that the *affaire*

was so completely clandestine that I would never be able to pin anything on him. And . . . he's right. He and his mistress are clever, shrewd. It would be impossible to catch them in any compromising situation. Therefore, I cannot apply for a divorce on such a basis. Moreover, Henri will not consent to the separation. He will give me no other grounds." She looked unhappily at the lawyer. "Wh-what am I to do?" she whis-

pered very miserably, disconsolately.

Despard frowned thoughtfully. "Sacre bleu!" he muttered. "It is indeed a situation!" Then, abruptly, he smiled wryly. "Unless—" he hesitated.

"Unless what, *Monsieur*?"

"Unless you have recourse to an old Parisian custom, *Madame*." The good-looking young attorney seemed almost reluctant to mention what this custom was.

Sally leaned forward, suddenly in-



"Now we can
talk alone—"

terested. This movement caused the neck of her Lanvin frock to fall away from the glorious white mounds of her unbrassiered breasts, so that Despard's eyes could not help seeking the heavenly vale between them. "Wh-what is this custom you refer to, Monsieur Despard?" Sally asked.

He looked into her eyes. He flushed a little. "We-e-ll, it is this: Suppose you pay back your husband in his own coin?" he said slowly.

Sally stared. "I—I'm afraid I don't quite understand what you mean."

He smiled gently. "Since your husband is unfaithful to you . . . then why not, in turn, be unfaithful to him?"

Sally gasped and blushed furiously. Her hand fluttered to the delectably-jutting region of her heart. "Monsieur Despard!" she whispered in a shocked undertone. "Are you suggesting that I . . . that I . . . permit some other man to . . . make love to me?"

Despard shrugged with Gallic grace. "Would it not be poetic justice?"

Sally got to her feet. "Perhaps it would be poetic justice," she said unsteadily, "but it would also mean that I should be degrading myself down to my husband's level. *Non*, Monsieur Despard. If that is the only redress I can have against Henri Duvalle, . . . I prefer to forget the entire matter! I—I bid you good-day, *Monsieur*."

She turned and walked toward the door of the office. Strangely, she felt no inward indignation at Richard Despard's shameless suggestion. After all, he was French—and the French have queer ideas of morality, when viewed from the American stand-

point of much stricter conventions.

Despard reached the door just ahead of her. "I am sorry if I have said anything to offend you, *Madame*," he whispered. "*Mille pardon*—and I hope you will forgive me."

Sally smiled. It was a lovely smile, and it did things to masculine veins and arteries. It had its effect upon the lawyer—that was obvious. He drank in, once more, the lovely contours of Sally's sylph-like form.

"I—I forgive you, of course, Monsieur Despard!" Sally whispered. And again she felt herself drawn toward him a little by the magnetic quality of him. . . .

He took her hand; pressed a kiss upon her pink finger-tips. "*Au revoir*, Madame Duvalle," he said regretfully. "And if I can think of any way to help you, I shall send you some message."

The ardent, evanescent touch of his lips upon her fingers filled Sally with thrilling little showers of electricity. She withdrew her hand and smiled a wistful smile. "I'm afraid there's nothing you can do. I shall have to sit by and permit my husband to carry on this hateful *affaire* with Manon Lefèvre."

"Manon Lefèvre, you say?" he seemed interested. "The fan-dancer in your husband's latest musical revue?"

"*Oui*. She is the one. But I cannot prove it!" Sally said. And then she went out. . . .

AT home, Sally undressed and showered. Then, *sans negligee* or *undies*, she threw herself upon the bed in her *boudoir*, and gave herself over to reflections.

She thought of Richard Despard's naughty suggestion that she . . . have

an *affaire* with some other man. Strange, how little she had been shocked by that suggestion, deep in her heart. Why, a year ago, back in New York, it would have aroused a surging tide of righteous indignation within her. But now . . . well, ten or twelve months in the gala, careless atmosphere of Paris had changed Sally's views a good deal. Not that she, herself, would ever consent to such a thing. But on the other hand, she didn't see that there would be so much harm in it, under the circumstances. . . .

After all, her husband *was* cheating on her. And since she couldn't get enough evidence for a divorce it would serve him darned good and right to repay him in the same coin to use the phrase the handsome attorney, had employed. . . .

Sally blushed when she realized the trend her thoughts had taken. Why—that was wicked! Two wrongs didn't make a right. And besides, even to think of giving herself to some man other than her husband was downright shameful. . . .

And yet, shameful or not, she kept thinking about it; naughtily savoring the taste of the idea in her mind. Just suppose she did take such a wicked step! Let's see—what sort of man would she choose for a partner in the *affaire*?

Certainly none of her husband's friends. There wasn't an attractive man in the lot. And certainly none of her former flames back in New York. Then who—?

She thought of Richard Despard, the attorney. And blushed as she thought of him.

Now, *there* was a man she might like . . . ! He was tall and good-looking, and he wore no beard. And

he had the nicest, most compelling eyes. . . . Moreover, the touch of his lips upon her fingers had filled her with the queerest, newest, most unexpected sensations. . . .

She lay back and closed her eyes, day-dreaming about the good-looking lawyer. How would he act if he were with her now? What would he do if he could see her as she was at present, lying upon the bed with not the slightest shred of covering to conceal the heavenly delights of her feminine body . . . ? Would he kiss her? Sally's fingers went to her own bee-stung lips. Would he stroke



her shoulders? She touched herself on the shoulders. Would he have the audacity to . . . cup her firm little breasts . . . ? Wickedly her palms went to those glorious, rising beauties with their coral crests. And the coral crests seemed to harden and become ruby jewels as Sally stroked them. . . .

She shivered in vicarious ecstasy. Then she frowned. I mustn't think such thoughts, she told herself . . . I mustn't even have such ideas, in my mind . . . I'm just the same as an abandoned woman, for harboring such wicked notions. . . .

She closed her eyes once more, and fell into a troubled doze. . . .

It was dark when she awakened. Her maid was standing by the bed. "Pardonnez-moi, Madame," the girl said. "Mais—I have two messages for you." And she handed Sally two envelopes.

Sally opened them. The first was from her husband:

"Cher Sally:

I am busy at the theatre rehearsing a new act, and cannot get home to déjeuner. I trust that your lonely meal will be savory.

Henri."

The second note was in an unfamiliar handwriting. Sally looked at it:

"My dear Madame Duvalle:

I have thought of a plan which might fit your present problem and solve it. Would you be good enough to allow me to send my car for you at eight o'clock this evening? If you do not think it too unconventional, we can have dinner in my apartment, and then discuss the matter referred to in your visit to my office today.

Sincerely,

Richard Despard."

Sally considered this for a brief interval. Then she reached a decision. Her husband, Henri, would not be home until late. He was probably spending the evening with his mistress, Manon Lefevre, the fan-dancer in his revue. Well, if the attorney had stumbled upon some method whereby Sally could get a divorce—why not?

Sally turned to her maid. "Telephone the home of Monsieur Richard Despard, whose number you will find in the phone book. Tell him that he may send his chauffeur for me as he suggested."

"Qui, Madame!" the maid curtsied.

AND so it came about that Sally found herself in Richard Despard's bachelor apartment in a fashionable outskirts of Paris, shortly after eight that night. Richard himself met her at the door.

"I have dismissed my servants for the evening," he said with a gracious smile, "so that we might talk alone and unheard. You are not distressed by this?"

"Certainly not!" Sally laughed liquidly. "Why should I worry about conventions? My husband doesn't!"

Richard took her arm. "Shall we have our *aperitifs* in this room?" he suggested, leading her into a comfortable, masculine-looking lounge.

"Merci. Certainment!" Sally said.

Despard himself prepared the drinks. And after the third one, he sat beside Sally on the divan. "Shall we have *dejeuner* now, or shall we wait a bit?"

"Let's . . . wait a bit!" Sally answered. She felt strangely warm and glowing inside—perhaps from the drinks, perhaps from the nearness of



the handsome Richard Despard.

"Do you know you are very *charmant*, very lovely?" he whispered.

"Am I?"

"*Oui*. You are the most beautiful, enticing girl I have ever known. It makes my heart throb and beat faster, just to be near you!" He looked at her. "Does . . . does it make *your* heart beat a little faster to be near *me*?" he whispered.

Sally blushed a little. "*Non*; I think not," she fibbed.

He frowned. "But I cannot believe that, *cherie*! Let me see for myself!" he said audaciously. And with unexpected eagerness, his palm went to Sally's delicious left breast.

He seemed to have difficulty finding her heart, for his hand moved around quite a bit. And besides, Sally's daring evening-gown seemed to be an obstruction to his sense of touch; for abruptly he slipped his delving fingers inside the décolletage, so that his hand came into thrilling contact with nude, pliant, responsive girl-flesh. . . .

Sally gasped sharply. "*Monsieur*!" she panted. "Richard . . . !"

"I was right and you were wrong. Your heart *does* beat faster!" he whispered triumphantly. He pressed his fingers more eagerly into Sally's quivering, tautening breast. . . .

For an instant she tried to escape him. And then cascading naughtiness showered through her, and she forgot inhibitions, conventions, everything—

She forgot everything except that the handsome Richard Despard was thrilling her as she'd never been thrilled before. . . .

"If you were free, would you marry me, *cherie* . . . ?" he whispered.

"*Oui . . . mon cher* Richard. . . ."

"Then it is almost the same as if we were already married . . . !" he said boldly. He was unfastening her shoulder-straps; and then his hands were at the hem of her skirt. . . .

Sally closed her eyes and was transported to a temporary but very blissful heaven. . . .

It was after midnight when Sally left Richard's apartment. Strange, how she had actually done the very thing he had suggested that day in his office; how she had repaid her husband's unfaithfulness in the same coin. . . . But yet with a difference, of course. She loved Richard, and he loved her. They would marry, whenever she was able to divorce Henri Duvalle. . . .

On the streets, newsboys were crying the early editions of the morning newspapers. One lad was hawking a certain unsavory sheet much given to scandals. Something the boy yelled brought Sally to abrupt attention. "*Mon Dieu*—!" she suddenly whispered.

She bought a paper; stared at its headlines:

LAWYER BRINGS SUIT AGAINST WIFE; NAMES PROMINENT REVUE-PRODUCER

Richard Despard, *avocat*, this afternoon filed suit for divorce against his wife, who is known professionally as Manon Lefevre, a fan-dancer. Despard named Henri Duvalle, show impresario, as co-respondent. . . .

Abruptly, the world seemed to swim about Sally's head. Cold chills struck through her. And then, erasing her sudden disillusioned heart-break, there came a surge of hot anger—

She turned; made her way swiftly back to Richard Despard's apartment. She knocked imperiously. He admitted her. "Sally—*cherie*—" he greeted her.

"So!" she hurled at him. "So you used me as a tool! It's just an old Paris custom—I believe that's what you called it!"

Richard stared at her. "Sally, beloved!" he exclaimed. "I do not quite comprehend—!"

"But I comprehend!" Sally stormed miserably. "You . . . m-made love to me j-just to get even with my husband f-for m-making love to your own w-wife!"

"What?" Richard stiffened.

"It's in the papers!" Sally went on. "You are the husband of Manon Lefevre, and you are suing her for divorce because of her misconduct with my own husband, Henri Duvalle! But divorce was not enough for you! You had to get even with your wife in another way. An old Parisian custom, you called it when you suggested it to me in your office today! You . . . m-made love to me j-just to get even with your wife . . . and to have p-poetic justice on m-my husband . . . !" Sally's eyes filled with tears. "And all the t-time, I thought you really l-loved m-me!"

Richard Despard suddenly grabbed Sally, held her close. "*Cherie*, you are quite wrong!" he said quietly. "I had known for a long time of my wife's unfaithfulness. But I didn't

care—we French are rather queer that way, perhaps. But when you walked into my office today, I lost my heart to you. I wanted you—wanted to possess you, entirely and wholly and forever. Therefore, I knew I must divorce my own wife, Manon Lefevre.

"And when you told me that it was your own husband who was my wife's lover, I had all the information I needed to set the wheels in motion. Knowing the name of my wife's lover, I had enough additional evidence for a divorce suit. But when I invited you here to my apartment tonight, it was not because I wanted to have poetic justice on your husband and my wife. I made love to you because—"

"B-because why?" Sally whispered.

"Because I think you are the most adorable girl in the world, and I want you to be my wife when we have both divorced our present mates!"

"Richard — darling — you really mean it?" Sally's eyes were shining now, and her lips were pursed for a kiss.

"*Mais oui*. I mean every word of it!" he whispered ardently. And his arms enfolded her. . . .

It was dawn when Sally left Richard's apartment the next time. And meanwhile, she'd learned several more old Parisian customs. All of them very, very nice. . . .

Minnie: "I'm sorry for bees, aren't you?"

Pearl: "Not particularly, why?"

Minnie: "Oh, because they have to spend their whole life-time making their honey."

SCREEN SCANDALS

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JUST ONE NIGHT

(Continued from page 42)

that some sharp sound had aroused him. He lay quiet for a moment, listening. Sunlight fell in narrow bars close to the window — it must be nearly noon, he thought. From the street below, a faint confused hum miscellaneous noises arose. Suddenly footfalls in the hall outside intruded on the quiet, steps sounded on the stairs. Michael bolted out of bed, his alarmed gaze sweeping the apartment Marie was gone, a note was propped up on the dresser. He bounded to the door, tore it open. The familiar little turban was just disappearing around the bend in the stairs.

"Marie! Marie!"

She fled at the sound of his voice, but in half a dozen leaps he was beside her, caught her to him.

"Oh, Michael," her lovely eyes were filled with tears. "I couldn't bear to

say goodbye to you—I thought it would be better just to slip away."

He gathered her up in his arms and carried her back to the apartment. He sat down on the couch, held her on his lap. Tenderly he kissed her tears away.

"Listen to me, sweetheart. You're not going away from me—now or ever. I don't care what our agreement was—I don't care what your secret is—nothing can matter against our love."

He paused for an instant. "I, too, had other plans—" He thought of his American heiress. Bah—to the devil with American heiresses! "But that was before *you* came along!"

He kissed the tip of her nose. "You don't have a husband, darling?"

She shook her head vigorously.

"Or a lover?"

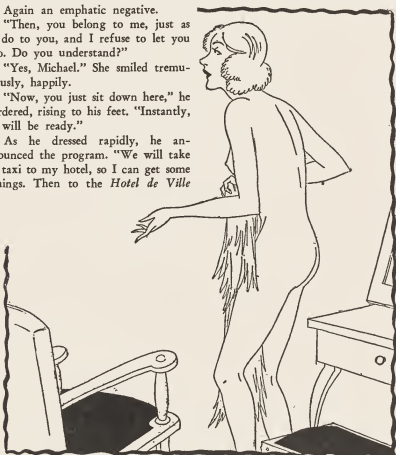
Again an emphatic negative.

"Then, you belong to me, just as I do to you, and I refuse to let you go. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Michael." She smiled tremulously, happily.

"Now, you just sit down here," he ordered, rising to his feet. "Instantly, I will be ready."

As he dressed rapidly, he announced the program. "We will take a taxi to my hotel, so I can get some things. Then to the *Hotel de Ville*



and a minister. Then, and not before, we breakfast."

In the taxi, his arms were close around her.

"Now tell me something about yourself. You know, we haven't yet been introduced."

They laughed. Marie spoke.

"I am Marie Hastings. You've heard of Hastings, the successful American who lived most of his life in Paris?"

Michael nodded dumbly, astounded.

"He was my uncle," she continued. "For the last three years, I lived here

in Paris with him. When he died last winter he left me all his possessions, with the one condition that to inherit, I must marry a Frenchman. He really loved France and the French people."

She was quiet for a minute.

"But I don't care, Michael. I'd rather have you than all the Frenchmen in Paris, and I don't care if we haven't a penny!"

She snuggled up against him, while Michael swore softly in amazement—

The taxi rumbled through the *Place*

Vendome, stopped before the Ritz. The imposing concierge opened the door, greeting Michael as he stepped out.

"Monsieur le Marquis! Bonjour!"

Marie halted in the act of alighting from the cab. "Marquis—? What's this, Michael?" Her eyes were round with astonishment.

Michael grinned. "Yes, *Mademoiselle* Hastings. Permit me to introduce Michael Shaughnessy Clanart, Marquis de Montreuil. And among

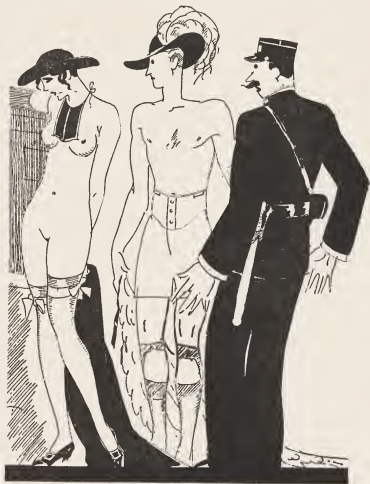
the few remaining possessions of the house of Montreuil is a beautiful chateau in Provencal, to which the Marquis is very impatient to take his even more beautiful bride."

Marie stared at him.

"Why—you gay deceiver!"

"Why—you old humbug!" he retorted.

And then before the appreciative eyes of the *concierge* and the taxi driver, Michael drew Marie to him for a public embrace. . . .



MIX BUSINESS WITH PLEASURE

(Continued from page 18)

*A hot
floor show
was in
progress—*

my loss was sufficiently covered by insurance."

"You are quite fortunate in that respect," interposed Muriel as she watched a lone, early fly, preparing to settle on Mr. Jackson's bald head.

"Quite so, quite so, my dear Miss—"

"Allen is the name," dimpled Muriel.

"Ah,—Miss Allen," Mr. Jackson settled back in his upholstered office chair, and placed the tips of his long fingers together. He peered unblinkingly with his deep-set, pale amber

eyes, through his glasses at the young couple before him.

"Pardon a personal question," began Neil, "but would you mind telling us if your business has been good of late."

"Not at all. Not at all. At present it is good. Excellent. I really can't complain. Jackson Jewelry is a household word. We have an established reputation."

"Do you mind," asked Muriel, rising to her feet, a lovely vision in her jaunty little blue hat, with her becoming blue cape dress accentuating the contours of her shapely form, "if I go out and talk with your clerks a little?"

"You have," Jackson told her, "my permission." This as his eyes wandered down to her symmetrically proportioned legs and her slim ankles, melting as they did, into her dainty, high-heeled, slippers.

MURIEL excused herself and went out into the store, where she gave the clerks one of her most engaging smiles. Immediately they were her slaves, each and every one forgetting their nice, reliable, rotund wives, for this lovely vision before them.

"Which one of you gentlemen," inquired Muriel gently, "waited on the customer who desired to look at the rubies?"

"I did," confessed a medium tall man with dark-brown hair and a long nose. "I waited on the gentleman."

"Did you notice," continued Muriel, "anything peculiar about him? Anything different?"

"No," denied the other, not taking his eyes from off her face, "I didn't."

"Please," begged Muriel, "think very hard. Did he by chance snap his fingers. Pull his ear. Rub his chin, or anything like that?"

The man's dull eyes brightened perceptibly. "Why yes, Miss—"

"Allen is the name," supplanted Muriel.

"Miss Allen, he did place his right forefinger alongside of his nose several times. I did notice that!"

"You are very observing," commended Muriel, as she smiled sweetly across at the clerk. Might just as well give him a thrill. She turned to one of the other clerks.

"How about the other two men who came in afterwards? Did you notice anything about them?"

The clerk who had come forward to wait on them shook his graying black head. "Sorry, Miss, but they didn't give me much time to observe them before they shot that terrible stuff in my face. In falling," he added looking for sympathy, "I struck my head."

"I'm so sorry," murmured Muriel with charmed feeling, as her rather oblique eyes flashed strangely.

Just then Barton and Jackson came into the store and joined Muriel.

"I have concluded my questioning of these gentlemen," Muriel told Neil. "Shall we go?"

"Yes."

"It has," said Mr. Jackson bowing slightly and poising his long fingers together, "been a real pleasure to have met you both. Permit me to wish you the very best of luck in your investigation."

"Thank you," appreciated Neil dryly, "I am sure we will need it. Good day."

"Good-afternoon," and Jackson saw them to the door of the store.

"A G what puts his forefinger alongside his nose, eh?" meditated Limpy after Neil and Muriel had returned to the office. "Well I dunno." Then after a few minutes hesitation, Limpy added: "Cripes, I do know of a gink what does that. He is known as 'Count' Malraux. A Frenchman he is, what was more than likely one of those Apaches in his own country. He sure is one slick number from all I've heard tell. I ain't sayin' he's your man, but he might stand investigatin'."

"Does he," Muriel wanted to know, "like the ladies?"

"He just lives for 'em! And—does this gink fall for blonde babies like you, Miss Allen!"

"Good!" exclaimed Muriel, "and now tell us if you can, Limpy, where does this 'Count' Malraux hang out?"

"Well now of course I ain't been runnin' with the mob for close onto three months now, but the last I heard tell he was goin' to the "Mandarin Duck" roadhouse, out on the River Road. Seems I heard somewhere that he was a part owner in the shindig. That place has got a shady rep."

"Yes," conceded Neil, "I've heard of it. What," he inquired of Muriel, "was your plan?"

LATE that same night the three of them in Neil's car which was parked close to the entrance of the "Mandarin Duck" roadhouse, watched everyone who entered, especially Limpy whose job it was to identify the "Count".

It was almost midnight before a sleek, dark blue coupe pulled up in the parking yard, and an elegantly appareled man in evening dress, and

affecting a small black mustache, got out of it and came under the brilliant electric sign. Limpy immediately became excited.

"Here's where we go into action. Limpy, you stay in the car. I'll see you later. Come on, Neil."

The two young people got out of the car. Looking back, Muriel saw the dog-like devotion and admiration in Limpy's eyes as he saw her in her stunning black velvet gown with its short cape of iridescent feathers of the lophophore bird. Her hair was beautifully arranged, while her fair young cheeks were attractively suffused by an inner color which lent allure to her personage.

Neil and Muriel watched just inside the door to see the table where the "Count" should be seated.

"I'll go in alone and flirt with him. You'd better go back to the car with Limpy, and follow in case I get in too tight a jam. Ordinarily I can take care of myself but still—"

Muriel requested the waiter to seat her across from the 'Count'. A hot floor show was in progress as she took her seat and ordered something to drink. Immediately she began looking brightly about her and let her eyes come to rest, as though by accident, upon the 'Count'. Muriel smiled invitingly as she took a cigarette from her wrist bag.

The 'Count', set his glass down on the table with meticulous care and raised his eyebrows in a quizzical way.

Muriel smiled again and nodded. Her heart leaped within her as she saw him rise from his table and come over to hers.

"*Mademoiselle* ees alone, *oui*?"

"You said it, Big Boy," smiled Muriel, "won't you sit down?"

"*Merci, Mademoiselle*, eet weel be

a great pleasure. You come here—"

"This is the very first time," Muriel confided to him. "You see," she added, "I just had a fight with the boy-friend. I wanted him to bring me here and he said it had a bad reputation. Is that the truth?"

"*Non, non*," denied the 'Count' as he laid a long forefinger against the side of his nose, and then beckoned for a waiter.

Muriel felt an acute acceleration of her pulses at his action. So far, so good. "The show," she said, "is very good."

"Me, I am so glad zat you like eet." Then to the waiter, he ordered drinks for them both.

"I—I was fortunate in finding such a nice man here," murmured Muriel naively.

"*Non*, eet ees I who ees ze fortunate one, *n'est ce pas*?"

For over an hour they sat at the table getting better and better acquainted. Muriel told him her name was Mary Arnold, while he told her of his lovely chateau in France.

At one-thirty, the 'Count' suggested that they leave for his apartment—the roadhouse was getting too noisy. Some place private and quiet would be much better, and Muriel readily agreed with him. The 'Count' paid their bill and they left the place together and entered the man's car. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Neil start up his car, ready to follow them.

THE 'Count' had an apartment in the western section of the city. He took Muriel up to the third floor in the self-operating elevator. He unlocked the door of his apartment and ushered her in, making her comfortable on the divan while he went

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to his kitchen to mix some more drinks. Muriel's head felt a bit queer from drinking a little too much, but she was still mistress of her facilities and knew what she was about.

Before the divan was a round, metal table having a single column for a base, set into a circle of black marble. On this table the 'Count' placed the drinks that he had mixed. Settling himself upon the divan he offered Muriel a glass of the amber, effervescent liquid. He drained his glass at two gulps and then placed his arm about her waist and drew her to him.

"You are verry charming, cherie," he murmured thickly, "I zink you and I weel haf a verry nize time." He took Muriel's glass from her and set it down. The whites of his dark eyes were bloodshot, his breath was coming in quick, heavy gasps. It fanned Muriel's flushed cheeks and made her shiver within herself, and still, she permitted him to have his way with her. Kissing her lips and fondling her body.

If only he'd fall asleep so she could search his apartment. To question

him directly would only arouse his suspicion. Heavens, how much longer could she stand his abuse? Just as the 'Count' was trailing his burning lips down the white column of her neck, the apartment buzzer sounded. Her nerves jumped. Neil and Limpy? If it were them, they would surely ruin her game. The 'Count' took away his lips.

"Listen, cherie, I do not know who zat ees, but you had better go into ze bedroom." He waved an unsteady hand in the direction of a closed door which was on a direct line with the divan and table.

"All right, Big Boy," Muriel was a bit dizzy as she got to her feet, and swayed slightly as she made her way into the bedroom. Closing the door carefully behind her, she immediately stooped over and applied her eye to the key-hole after first removing the key.

Into her line of vision walked two men. They talked for a long time in low voices and then, as Muriel watched, the 'Count's' hands took the glasses off the round table. He pressed a button and the top flew up. Mu-



riel's eyes widened as she saw him lift from the inside of the table a gorgeous necklace, whose jewels scintillated a brilliant red fire. Surely, the missing ruby necklace!

Wildly Muriel looked about the bedroom in which she had secreted herself. A telephone cradled beside the bed caught her eyes. Quickly she pulled down the bedclothes and crawled under the coverings and then she lifted the phone in after her. Under her improvised tent she dialed for the police department and whispered hurried instructions into the mouthpiece. Scrambling out of the bed she lifted the long black skirt of her dress, and took her tiny, pearl-handled .22 out of her gun holster, which she had strapped above her knee.

Muriel threw open the door with a dramatic gesture and pointed her deadly gun at the two startled men—

"Reach for the ceiling, gentlemen," she commanded.

"Cut eet, *cherie*," said the 'Count,' "zis man, he ees a fren of mine." He tried to close the table.

"Put your hands up, 'Count,'" she yelled, "or I'll drill you through. I mean it!"

Long minutes ticked by while Muriel gamely held her pose. If only the police would hurry.

Finally the buzzer sounded. She backed slowly toward the door release and pushed the button. Coppers from a near-by radio car filled the room. Neil and Limpy came in after them. Neil stared at the man seated next to the 'Count'.

"Why, Muriel, what is this? Surely you must be making a mistake, he is—"

"Sure, I know," admitted Muriel, her hand dropping to her hip. "Mr. Lawrence Jackson in person! He hired the 'Count' to snatch the rubies. Bet you'll find he is in a financial hole—he evidently intended giving a portion of the insurance money to the 'Count' and using the rest for himself. Since the rubies were hot and thoroughly described in the policy, he probably meant to separate them and sell 'em as unset gems. Take the two gentlemen on the divan to headquarters, boys!"

And then to Neil: "Better take me home, Partner, there are some things that require our combined attention!"

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